

*K. with preceding*  
The Government of Passion.

A *693.d*  
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

QUEEN

At St JAMES's Chapel,

On Sunday the 7th of January, 1711.

*H. Clarke*  
By SAMUEL CLARK, D.D. Rector of  
St James's Westminster, and Chaplain in Or-  
dinary to Her Majesty.

Published by Her Majesties Special Command.

L O N D O N,

Printed by Will. Botham, for James Knapton, at  
the Crown in St Paul's Church-Yard. 1711.

Price Three-Pence.

The [illegible] of [illegible]

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# EPHES. IV. 26.

*Be ye Angry, and Sin not.*

**S**INCE in the ordinary Conduct of Human Life, and in the *Common Affairs* of the World, *Natural Wisdom* teaches us, that the only sure and effectual means of avoiding great Evils, is the preventing of small ones; and that the *Beginnings* of Mischief are much more easily prevented, than the *Progress* of them stopped, or the *Consequences* of them remedied:

Since under the improvements of *Philosophy* in the Heathen World, the principal and most useful Precept given Men for the Government of their Passions, was to watch continually, and guard themselves against the *first Emotions* of Passion rising up in opposition to Reason; to stop the first breaking out of a silent Stream, which by



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Neglect would swell into an overflowing Torrent ; to extinguish the first Spark of a scarce discernable Fire, which by degrees would prevail into a destroying Conflagration :

Since by the still purer and more refined Precepts of the *Doctrine of Christ*, we are obliged to govern even our very *Thoughts and Desires* ; to pray against the *Temptations* and *first Occasions* of Sin ; to lay the Ax to the Root of the Tree, by *suppressing* all corrupt *Affections*, by *restraining* all inordinate *Appetites*, by *moderating* and keeping even a strict Hand over *innocent Inclinations* ; by *plucking out*, if need be, even a *right Eye*, and *cutting off* a *right Hand* :

Since these things, (I say,) are so ; It may well seem strange, to any one that is not versed in the Jewish manner of speaking, how St Paul should come to express himself after such a sort, as if he intended to indulge Men in letting loose the Reins to their Passions, as far as was consistent with Innocency



ocency ; and thought it safe to permit Men to allow themselves in the gratification of their Anger, provided they did but just keep themselves without the Borders of Sin : *Be ye Angry, and Sin not.* As if the Bounds between what is excusable and criminal, were marked with so distinct a limit, that Men might be trusted to discern with ease, *when* they were at the utmost extent of their lawful Liberty ; or that it could be supposed Men had so perfect a Command of themselves, as to be able to stop suddenly at an appointed Mark in a swift Career, and say (when they please) to their Passion, *hitherto shalt thou go, and no further.*

Our Saviour, in his Divine Sermon upon the Mount, makes it in almost every Instance, his peculiar Improvement of Moral Obligations under the Gospel, to warn Men against the *Approaches* and *Tendencies* towards those sins, whereof only the *gross Acts* were forbidden under the Law.

*We have heard that it was said*

Mat. 5, 27.

by

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by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit Adultery : But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, has already committed Adultery with her in his Heart. Ye have heard it has been said by them of old, Thou shalt not forswear thy self; but I say unto you, swear not at all. Ye have heard it has been said, An Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth : But I say unto you, that ye resist not Evil. Ye have heard it has been said, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy ; But I say unto you, Love your Enemies. And in the Case before us, of Wrath and Anger : Ye have heard, says he, that it has been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill : But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his Brother without a Cause, shall be in danger of the Judgment ;---- and whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire. Nay, in some of the antientest Copies of this Gospel, those Words of Restriction, (without Cause,) whosoever shall be Angry without Cause, are

re omitted ; and the Declaration is made in the most general Terms, *Whoever is Angry with his Brother, shall be in danger of the Judgment* : Men being apt enough of themselves, to put such restrictions as may be equitably presumed ; and there being no need, in the Body of the Law itself, to express such excepted Cases or such limitations, to which in all reason and equity it may however be supposed the Law cannot extend. This makes it still the more worthy of enquiry, whence it might come to pass, that St Paul expresses himself upon this Subject in such a manner, as may seem to give some *Indulgence* to such *Degrees* of *Passion* as are not directly sinful ; (*Be ye angry, and Sin not* ;) when yet both by Experience and the Reason of Things, and by our Saviours express Caution in all matters of this Nature, 'tis evident that Passions indulged to the utmost Bounds of Innocency, are much harder to restrain from entering into sinful degrees, than it



it was to prevent their beginnings of their arising at first.

Now the True Account of this Matter, seems plainly to be this. The Words, *Be ye Angry*, are not a Permission, as they may seem to be when taken alone; but, according to the Nature and Use of the Jewish Language, they are Part of a Single Proposition with those that follow. *Be ye Angry, and Sin not*; that is, *Take heed and beware of sinful Anger: Indulge not Anger, lest ye fall into Sin*. Or, *If at any time ye be provoked, then take particular Care that ye fall not into Sin*. For such is the Idiom of the Jewish Language; to express That in *Two* distinct Propositions, which ought so to be understood, as if they were put in *One*. There are many other Texts in Scripture, which will confirm this Interpretation; and the comparing them with this, will reciprocally afford much Light, towards the True Understanding of several of those Passages.

In the Old Testament; *Mal. 1. 2, 3.* *Jacob have I loved, saith God, and Esau have I hated.* The Propositions are not to be understood asunder, but to be taken together as One; *Jacob have I loved, more than Esau*; For God did not intend to express Hatred towards Esau; but only to love Jacob comparatively, with a greater Love. *Nahum 3, 14.* *Fortify thy strong holds, — there — shall the Sword cut thee off*: The intention is not to exhort Nineveh to fortify herself; but to declare, how much soever she does fortify her self, yet shall the Sword cut her off. And so *Isai 8, 9.* *Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in Pieces*; i. e. how much soever ye strengthen your selves, yet shall ye be broken. Again; *Ecclus. 30, 9.* *Cocker thy Child, and he shall make thee afraid; play with him, and he will bring thee to Heaviness*: The Proposition is but One; *If thou indulge thy Child, he will bring thee to Sorrow.* *Jer. 7, 22.* *I spake NOT unto your Fathers, nor commanded them, in the*  

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day that I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning Burnt-offerings or Sacrifices; But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my Voice: The two Parts of this Sentence of the Prophet, are not to be taken separately, as if he affirmed that God did not require Burnt-offerings at all; (for 'tis certain he did command them in most express Words in the Law;) but the whole is to be understood together, that God did not insist upon Burnt-offerings so much, as upon Obedience to the Commandments of the Moral Law. There is a like expression, Hos. 6, 6; I desired Mercy, and NOT Sacrifice: The meaning is not, that God did not require Sacrifice; but that he desired Mercy, rather than Sacrifice; and (as it follows in the very next Words) the knowledge of the Lord, more than Burnt-offerings. And thus also must be understood That passage in Ezekiel, chap. 20, 25; I gave them also statutes that were NOT good, and judgments by which they should not live: The meaning is not,



not, evil Statutes; God forbid: But Statutes, which comparatively were not good; and Judgments which were not so profitable, as moral ones, to cause them to live.

In the New Testament, the same manner of expression, agreeable to the nature of the Jewish Language, is likewise frequently used; and it is necessary to be taken notice of, in order to the true understanding of several Passages. *I am not sent*, saith our Saviour himself, discoursing with the Woman of Canaan, *but to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel*; St Mat. 15, 24. His meaning is not absolute, (as might seem from the first part of the Sentence,) that he was *not sent at all* to any others than the Jews only; but that he was not sent so soon, so immediately, so principally; his Mission was not to be made known so early, to any other Nation, as to the *lost Sheep of the House of Israel*: For, that he was also, in process of Time, to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well

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as to be the Glory of his People *Israel*, the Scriptures of the Prophets expressly enough declared; and our Saviour himself in this very place sufficiently intimates, when immediately after that seeming refusal, yet he effectually granted this Strangers request, by healing the Infirmary of her Daughter: And in his Instructions to his Disciples, *chap. 10, 5*, he speaks with less obscurity; *Go not into the way of the Gentiles; — but go rather to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel*: Which afterwards was still more clearly expressed by the Apostle, *Acts 13, 46*; *It was necessary that the Word of God should first be spoken to the Jews; but afterwards to the Gentiles*. But, not to mention any other places, there is one Expression of *St Paul*, of this nature, more remarkable to the present purpose, than any other Passage in the whole Scripture: In the 6th Chapter of his Epistle to the *Romans*, at the 17th Verse; *God be thanked, saith he, that ye were the Ser-*

*vants*

wants of Sin : but ye have obeyed from the Heart That Form of Doctrine, which was delivered you. God be thanked, that ye were the Servants of Sin : It may seem a very strange and unusual Expression, according to the manner of speaking in modern Languages : But in the Jewish Idiom it was very intelligible, that the two parts of the Sentence should be taken as One ; God be thanked, for that ye, who once were the Servants of Sin, have since obeyed from the Heart That Form of Doctrine, which was delivered you.

And thus likewise in the Words of the Text ; Be ye angry, and Sin not. That is ; Take heed and beware of sinful Anger ; Indulge not Anger, lest ye fall into Sin ; Or, If at any time ye be provoked, then take particular care that ye fall not into Sin.

It is the same Caution, as in the Government of all other Passions or Desires. So use the World, as not abusing it ; So rejoice, as though ye rejoiced not ; So weep, as those that wept not ;  
So



So *be angry*, as that ye *Sin not*. The Meaning of the Words, being thus explain'd: That which remains, is; 1<sup>st</sup>; that I endeavour, in a practical manner, to represent unto you, what the *Kind or Degree* of that Anger is, which must be charged as Sinful. And 2<sup>dly</sup>, that I briefly set before you some of the *Mischiefs and Inconveniencies*, of allowing our Passion to arise to such a Sinful Degree.

Before we enter upon which Heads, it may be proper to premise two Things. 1<sup>st</sup>, that What shall be said concerning the Nature of *Anger* in particular, may with little variation be easily applied in general to the Government of *all other Passions* whatsoever. So that though the present Subject of our Discourse be *particular*, yet, by serious Meditation, it may without Difficulty be made *universally* useful, towards regulating the Conduct of Humane Life. And 2<sup>dly</sup>, that those Things which Scholastick Writers upon this Subject, have made burdensom to the

the Memory and intricate to the Understanding, by numerous Definitions, and more nice than necessary Distinctions; I shall endeavour to reduce under one single Head; that What to Persons of all Capacities is their Duty to practice, may, without affording Matter for Dispute or Subtily, be by all Persons equally understood.

I. These things being premised; proceed we 1<sup>st</sup> to inquire, what the Kind or Degree of that Anger is, which must be charged as Sinful. And This will best be understood, by considering briefly what the Nature and Use of our Passions is, and for what Intent they were implanted in us by our All-wise Creator.

Where Reason and Understanding are perfect; there, is no room for any Passion or Commotion: And therefore in the most perfect Being, there is no Passion. In God, there is, properly speaking, neither Anger nor Complacency, neither Love nor Hatred, neither Joy nor Sorrow: In Him there is no such Thing



Thing as Desire or Aversion ; no such Commotion, as either Hope or Fear : But his Actions are determined always by perfect and unmixed Reason, by eternal and unchangeable Equity ; Which, in the Supreme Mind, is an uninterrupted Calmness, like the Serenity of the Highest Heavens. For, though the Scripture does indeed represent to *Us* the Divine Actions, as proceeding from Passions like to Ours ; yet this is *not* representing them what they are really in *Him*, but only in Condescension to the Weakness of *our* Apprehensions, or with regard to their Effects upon *Us*. And as, in the same Scripture, *Hands* and *Feet* and *Eyes* are figuratively ascribed to Him, who, in reality, without Shape or Figure, is in all places every where alike present ; so by the like *Analogy* only it is, that to God are sometimes ascribed *Passions*, for which there is no Place in a Mind where Reason and Understanding are perfect.



On the contrary, where there is *no Reason* nor proper Understanding at all; as in Creatures inferior to *Us*; there, *Passions and Appetites* are the only Springs of Action, and by *Them* are irrational Creatures naturally and unavoidably directed.

Men, who (like *Beasts*, are formed out of the *Dust of the Earth*, and yet (like *Angels*) made after the Image of God; are of a middle Nature between these two States, between perfect Reason and mere irrational Appetites: Being indued with *Appetites and Passions*, to excite and stir them up to Action, where their bare abstract Understanding would leave them too remiss; and at the same time indued with Reason also, to govern and restrain themselves, where mere Appetites and Passions would hurry them on to things exorbitant and unreasonable. Herein therefore particularly lies the principal Duty of Man; in keeping his Passions subject to Reason, and in governing his Appetites by that Under-

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derstanding, wherewith God has distinguished him from the inferior Creation.

The *Affections* and *Passions* are not in themselves *Evil*, (as some of the Antient Philosophers vainly imagined;) but were implanted in us by the Wise Author of all things, for excellent Ends and very useful Purposes: that We, whose mixt Nature of Body and Spirit, would otherwise have made us too *remiss*, in pursuing the Ends to which bare abstract Reason directed us; might by the Affections and Passions, under the regulation of Reason, and subservient to it, i. e. by reasonable Fears and Hopes, by Love or Hatred, by Anger or Complacency, be pushed on and excited to be more earnest and vigorous, more constant and diligent in all those Actions of Life, which Reason directs, and the Affections execute.

But



But Now, when the Passions, instead of obeying Reason, over-rule and govern it; when they prevail against Reason, so as to put Men upon doing things which the Reason of their Minds at the same time forbids; or, (which is much the same thing,) when they become so violent as to abridge Men of their Liberty, and put them *beside* their Reason; so as to leave them no room or time to judge, whether the thing they are doing be reasonable or no; *Then* it is, that the Passions become truly Sinful: And Man, who when Reason governs him, is the Image of God; degenerates, by the Dominion of *Passion*, even below the Nature of a *Beast*. For those inferior Creatures, when they obey their Appetites, follow their *Nature*: But the Nature of *Man*, is to obey a higher Principle, even Reason and the *Law of God*; to which, He, who is governed by *Passion*, is not Subject, neither indeed can be; and therefore degenerates be-



low his proper Nature : Which is a Folly, whereof other Beings are not guilty:

From hence it becomes very evident, (which was the *first* thing proposed,) what the *Kind* or *Degree* of that *Anger* is, which must be charged as Sinful : Namely, that it is *Then* such, when it either puts Men *besides* the Use of their Reason, or upon acting in any sort *contrary* to it.

The Rule is *One*, and may without Difficulty be universally understood by *All* Men ; But the Application is *infinite*, and must be made by *every One* for his own *Particular*. Every Person knows, when he considers seriously with himself ; that his Anger becomes *Then* a sinful Passion, when it is stirred up *without just Cause*, or upon *any Cause* vents itself in *indecent Effects*; when it spoils his Temper by *frequent Returns*, or by its *Violence* exposes him to unseemly *Transports*, or by † its Con-

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† Let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath : The Words immediately following the Text.

*Humour* degenerates into Hatred and  
 Malice ; when its *Height* is disproportion-  
 ate to the *Occasion* that raised it,  
 or unbecoming the *Character* of the  
 Person provoked ; or the *Circumstan-*  
*ces* in any wise contrary to right  
 Reason and Religion. Which Cases  
 though they are indeed *infinitely vari-*  
*ous*, and therefore cannot be expres-  
 sed in any Methodical Direction ;  
 yet because the Rule (as was said) is  
 but *One* and unchangeably the same,  
 therefore the Application in Practice  
 is always *Easy* : *Easy* (I mean) to be  
 understood, that a Man is *then* always  
 to look upon his *Passion* as Sinful,  
 when it either puts him *beside* the  
 Use of his Reason, or upon acting  
 any thing *contrary* to it : But not al-  
 ways so *Easy* to be *Practised* : Because  
 habitual *Passions*, are very apt to sur-  
 prize Men ; and will not be prevented,  
 but by a *constant Guard*. Yet, be-  
 cause it is a *necessary Duty*, so to pre-  
 vent and guard against them ; there-  
 fore in order to perswade Men to set  
 about



about the Practice of what is so indispensable and of so great importance, it is proper that we proceed now in the

II. *Second place*, to consider some of the *Mischiefs* and *Inconveniencies* of allowing our *Passions* to prevail in any of the fore-mentioned *Kinds* or *Degrees*.

And here we cannot but take notice, that even the *Heathen Moralists* themselves, have filled their *Discourses*, with *Arguments* against irregular and disorderly *Passions*; drawn from the *Indecency* and *Unseemliness*, of the *Thing itself*; from the *Shame* and *Indignity*, of a *reasonable Creature's* being subject to such *unreasonable Slavery*; from the *Uneasiness* of it, to *Ourselves*; from the *Injuriousness* of it, to *Others*; and from many other *Considerations*, which prove a *Man*, who is governed by his *Passion*, to be incapable even of true *Philosophy*, incapable of coming up to so much as the *Moral Improvements* but of a *Wise Heathen*.

And



And the Scripture itself sometimes makes use of such Natural Arguments: From the Folly of the thing itself, Eccles. 7, 9; Be not hasty in thy Spirit to be Angry; For Anger resteth in the Bosom of Fools. Prov. 12, 16; A Fools wrath is presently known, but a prudent Man covereth Shame; and Chap. 14, ver. 17, 29. He that is slow to Wrath, is of great Understanding; but he that is soon Angry, dealeth Foolishly; and he that is hasty of Spirit, exalteth Folly. Again; From the Contempt it draws upon Men, who are observed to be guilty of this Weakness; Prov. 15, 28, He that hath no Rule over his own Spirit, is like a City that is broken down, and without Walls. From the frequent Mischiefs and Damages it brings upon them; Prov. 19, 19, A Man of great Wrath shall suffer Punishment; For if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again: And Job 5, 2, Wrath killeth the foolish Man, and Envy slayeth the silly One. Also, from the natural Excellency of the contrary Practice;

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*Etice; Prov. 16, 32, He that is slow to Anger, is better than the Mighty; and he that ruleth his Spirit, than he that taketh a City.*

But to *Us Christians*, there are still higher Arguments to convince us of the Mischief of being governed by our Passions; and to perswade us of the Necessity, of restraining them within due Bounds. For *Us*, to indulge our Passions; is to deprive ourselves wholly of that Temper, that Frame and Disposition of Mind which is the peculiar Character and Obligation of a Christian. If a *Philosopher*, if a *Wise Heathen*, upon the common Principles of Reason and Morality; If a *Man*, upon the bare consideration of the Dignity of his *Nature* above the Beasts that perish is under Obligation to subdue his Appetites and Passions to Reason: How much more is a *Christian* bound, to keep himself still under stricter and more severe restraints?



For when a *Christian* indulges his *Passion*, let him consider *Who* it is, that acts so unworthily, and behaves himself so unseemly: A Man indued with *Reason* and *Understanding*: A Man, whose *Reason* is *improved*, not by *Philosophy* only, but moreover by the *Knowledge* of the *revealed Will* of *God*: A Man, for whom *Christ* dyed; to whom *God* has been freely reconciled, and, out of mere *Mercy* and *undeserved Compassion*, vouchsafed to turn away his *Anger* from him.

And against *Whom* does this person direct the *Violence* of his *Passion*? Against a *Man* like himself; against his *Friend* or his *Brother*, Bone of his Bone, and *Flesh* of his *Flesh*; one for whom *Christ* dyed as well as for himself, and by his own *Blood* redeemed them both from *Death*.

And *What* is it for, that one *Christian* Man, is fiercely angry against another? Perhaps for a *careless Word*, for an *undesigned Provocation*, for a *difference in Opinion*; possibly for re-  
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taining a *good Conscience*, and not daring to do what the other expects of him; at most, for some slight and trivial *Offence*; for not being able to repay him his *Hundred Pence*, when God has forgiven them Both their *Ten Thousand Talents*.

Not that one Christian may not, in a just and legal manner, *compel* another to do what is right and equitable: Much less, that Superiors should not by their Authority *oblige* Inferiors, to perform the proper Duties of their *Respective Stations*: But that in these, and all other Cases, *Religion and Equity* be the *Ground*; and *Reason*, not *Passion*, the *Measure* of the *Compulsion*.

If any thing in the World could make exorbitant *Passion* excusable; it should seem to be when *Vice* is the Object of the *Displeasure*; and Concern for the *Honour of God*, the Cause of the *Commotion*. Nevertheless, even in *this* Case, our Saviour himself, when he was not only *reviled*, but *reviled* also with *Blasphemy* against

God

God himself, yet reviled not again : And Michael the Archangel, when contending with the Devil, yet did not bring against him a railing Accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee ; Jude 9. And the Scripture accordingly directs, that a servant of God must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient ; In meekness instructing them that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth. For the Wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, St Jam. 3. 17. And St Paul exhorts, Eph. 4. 31, Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil-speaking be away from you, with all malice ; And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christs sake has forgiven you.

There is a remarkable History to this purpose in the Book of Jonah ; where, upon God's repenting to execute his Threatnings upon Nineveh,



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*Jonah* was displeased at it exceedingly, and he was very Angry; and persisted in it, that he did well to be Angry, even unto Death: But God reprov'd him by the similitude of a Gourd, at which *Jonah* was grieved when it perished suddenly; And the Lord said unto him, *Thou hadst pity on the Gourd, which came up in a Night, and perished in a Night; and should not spare Nineveh, that great City?*

When once a Man, whatever the Occasion be, gives himself up to his *Passion*; he is then out of the Use of his *Reason*, and he can never tell to what degree of *Unreasonableness* he may be pusht on. An angry Man stirreth up strife, and a furious person will abound in *Transgression*, Prov. 29, 22. As *Cains* causeless Displeasure against his Brother, increased by degrees beyond limit, till it ended in Murder. So *Passion* let loose even upon the most just Provocation, is like a Torrent breaking through a Bank; which will hardly be prevented from swelling



till it leads us into Sin. My beloved, saith St James, let every Man be -- slow to Wrath; For the Wrath of Man, (even though it be against what is Evil,) yet worketh not the righteousness of God.

The Cause of such disorderly Passions, is always Carelesness and want of Seriousness: The Remedy is, Consideration, Attention, and frequent Examination of a Mans self; so as to keep a constant Guard and Watchfulness over his Spirit. To be able perfectly to cure his Temper, to conquer himself wholly, and change his Disposition; is what no One ought to expect in this World; nor to be disappointed or discouraged, if he finds even the moderating it to be a Work of Difficulty and Time: But to endeavour to amend it daily, is his indispensable Duty; And he who considers how easily and suddenly he can restrain himself, at the coming in of a Superior whom he reveres among Men; must not pretend it impossible

possible for him to govern his Passions, with the Thoughts of the perpetual Presence of God.

There have been some, who have alleged in Excuse for themselves That Passage in Scripture, that the Apostles Themselves were Men of like Passions with us, Acts 14, 15. But the intent of That passage is much misunderstood, through an improper Translation. For the intention of St Paul and Barnabas speaking in that manner to the Men of Lystra, was not to say that they were Men of like Passions, in the Sense we now usually understand the Word; but that they were Men of like Infirmities, mortal Men like themselves, subject to Diseases, Casualties and Death; and therefore, not to be worshipped as Gods. So St Jam. 5, 17, Elias was a Man subject to like Passions as we are: The meaning is not, that he was a passionate, but that he was a mortal Man like one of us, and yet interceded effectually with God. But  
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if the meaning was literal, that the Apostles and Prophets had the same Passions with Us, (as undoubtedly they naturally had,) yet This is no excuse for Us, unless, like Them, we govern them also by the rules of Reason and Religion. *Be ye Angry, and Sin not.*

*Now unto the only Wise God, &c.*

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**FINIS.**

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